

## FUNCTIONAL EXPLORATION OF OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

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### ABSTRACT

*Plays are written to mirror human society and a satire like Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again does more to expose some sources of conflicts in the African political terrain, part of which boils down to language use. This study applies the speech act theory to the analysis of language use in the selected text, the analysis of speech function was done on the selected passage of the text using Searle's (1962) speech functions.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Analysis of Language, Different Theoretical Positions*

### INTRODUCTION

Language plays a major role in human enterprises across the globe. The roles range from interpersonal communication, cultural transmission, among others. The importance of language in any given society cannot be over-emphasized. In Africa as a society, it is not out of place to consider how language is used as it relates to war and conflict. Language is instrumental to conflict initiation and its resolution. Most conflicts arose from lack of understanding and this problem can be solved when we understand ourselves better via proper language use resulting in better communication. Therefore, this study considers it necessary to reveal how language is used in interactive discourse, Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again, in particular, helps to bring to fore some of the issues that affect African contemporary society.

### Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the *Speech Act Theory*, a theory of language for its analysis. The theory finds its root in the functional usage of language. It was developed basically to provide a functional explanation for language in use. The speech act theory, a prime anchor for textual functional considerations, was developed by J.L. Austin. According to Thomas (1995:55):

Austin originally (1960:52) used the term 'speech act' to refer to an utterance and the total situation in which the utterance is used'. Today, the term 'speech act' is used to mean the same as 'illocutionary act' - in fact, you will find the terms speech act, illocutionary act, illocutionary force, pragmatic force or just *force*, all used to mean the same thing - although the use of one rather than another may imply different theoretical positions. The speech act theory was developed in reaction to the belief of the logical positivists like Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, and others that language is imperfect and illogical, and that the illogicalities should be refined. In his monumental publication, *How To Do Things With Words*

he argues that instead of getting rid of language illogicalities and imperfections, it is necessary to understand how it is that people manage with it as they do. (Thomasl 995:27). Austin stresses further that when we speak, we perform certain action(s). He perceives such as performatives. Austin's performative is described as when certain verbs correspond to certain actions. Other verbs are seen as descriptive verbs. The differences between performatives and constatives (which Austin dwelled on) are seen in terms of truth values, Constatives are believed to have truth values because they can be true or false while performatives do not have this value.

Furthermore, Austin elaborates on speech Act theory by concentrating on its three components: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. The locutionary act has to do with the exact utterance or the specific intention of the speaker whereas the perlocutionary act is the effect of the speech on the hearer. For instance, a word uttered may have the intention to serve as a warning, request, persuasion, threat, greeting, etc. Austin goes further to classify illocutionary act into five groups namely "verdictives" "exercitives", "commissives", "behabitives" and "expositives".

Searle (1996, 1997) develops his Speech Act Theory based on Austin's (1962) postulation. Searle (1996:27) discussed five main speech acts. These are:

- Representatives, which are used in making assertions, conclusions, claims;
- Directives, which are used in commanding, begging, requesting and asking the hearer to do something;
- Commissives, which require commitment from the speaker like promising, vowing, offering, threatening;
- Expressive, which concern the psychological states of the speaker such as thinking, welcoming;
- Declaratives, which have to do with declaring, marrying, firing, etc.

Many other scholars have given these functions different names all in an attempt to describe the functions of language in use. Jacobson (1960:350-377) cited in Adegbite (1991:47) also suggests six categories in terms of six situational factors of communication. The suggestions are as follows:

- Addresser: Emotive/Expressive/Affective
- Addressee: Conative
- Conative: Referential/Cognitive/Denotative
- Message: Poetic
- Contact: Phatic/Interaction management
- Code: Metalinguistic

Adegbite (1991:47) relates these functional classifications to the functions they perform in texts. He posits five main categories of functions thus:

- The confirmative function represents all the informative (literal and non-literal) content of a text, whether such information is 'given or 'new', requested, asserted or suggested;

- The 'directive' function under his classification calls the attention of hearer or requires him to carry out a request or non-verbal action;
- (c) The 'expressive' function underlines the expression of emotions or attitudes of the speaker;
- The 'aesthetic' function is a function upgraded from the situational component of key (Hymes, 1972) or mode of a text, and it is relevant when the mode of presentation stands out in a text;
- The 'phatic' (or ritualized' - Akinaso, 1985) serves mainly to establish social contact or rapport between a speaker and hearer.

Adegbite (1991) goes further to say that these functions can co-occur severally or together in texts, but when they occur together, they acquire statuses as primary, secondary, and subsidiary function according to their performance of significance in texts.

The speech acts thus reviewed is present in our study of the interactive discourse, Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. This is because, the roles of the speech functions in the x-ray of the message projection and development of the text cannot be overemphasized. We shall, however, engage only the speech acts, i.e. functional classifications, of Searle's in our analysis in the present study. This is because this functional category has a great value for the literary enterprise.

### Text Selection and Analytical Procedure

OLA Rotimi has written many plays, poems and stories among which is *Our Husband Have Gone Mad Again*. Although, scholars have worked on our selected text using other linguistic and pragmatic theories, like Olateju and Yusuf (2006) who consider the black channel communication in the text. But own concern here is different because with considers the Speech Act theory and how it brings out the literary themes of the play as relating to war and conflict in Africa.

In analyzing the selected passages, from the playlet, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, we will utilize some extracts from the text based on the fact that those extracts reflect the main themes of the play.

The play is divided into two acts. from Act 1, we select from the scene I and scene III and the pages are 9,10,11,24 and 25. From Act II we selected from scene VI. The pages are 55, 57, 59 and 76.

### LITERARY THEMES OF THE PLAY

The literary themes of *Our Husband Have Gone Mad Again* includes (i) domestic conflict (ii) African polygamous family life (iv) marriage of contact (iv) lack of patriotism (v) lack of political strategies (vi) selfishness (vi) class of culture among others.

### Summary of Texts

The play revolves around a man and his family life in an African setting. The culture-linguistic identity of the man is reflected in his polygamous nature. Like any average African man, his belief in polygamous life is x-rayed in the play. The central character is presented as being a former military officer Major RahmanLajoka-Brown who takes to politics without having the necessary know-how. His motives have far more to do with vanity than patriotism and his attempts to

adapt to a situation he hardly comprehends produce highly comic results. His predicament is complicated by problems in his domestic life. The man has three wives: Mama Rashida, that he inherited from his late brother and Sikira, whom he married for political reasons. Liza the third wife came from America to rejoin him unexpectedly, only to discover the man has other two wives and he is also pre-occupied with politics.

OLA Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone mad Again* portrays the life of some Africans who think politics is not an art but what one can just lay hand on and succeed. This eventually ruined his selfish and unpatriotic ambition and motives. Major Lejoka-Brown marries Sikira, the daughter of the head of market women, Madam Ajanaku so that she would get him more votes by using her influence. Mama Rashida's marriage is a reflection of African culture. That is marrying the late brother's wife off to a close relation while his marriage to Liza is out of promiscuous nature. The emergence of Sikira in politics was a shock to her husband and this boils down to the issue of emergence of women in the political terrain of Africa.

The play is written to satirize the society and all that obtains in the political terrain of Africa. The language is charming with the playwright using a good sense of humor to paint the tragic picture of a politician while removing boredom from the readers, or actors and audience watching the play.

### OLA Rotimi and His Works

Emmanuel Gladstone Ola wale Rotimi was born on April 13, 1938, and died on August 18, 2000. He was born to a Yoruba father who hailed from Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria and he has an Ijaw mother from Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria. He was a professor of Dramatic arts at Obafemi University, Ile-Ife. After receiving his B.A. degree in Fine Arts in 1963, he proceeded to The Yale University School of Drama and obtained M.A. Dramatic Arts in 1966. He had published plays, books and directed many plays. His plays include *Kurumi* which was published in 1971, *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*, 1974, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* was produced in 1966 published in 1977 *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. He also produced a radio play which was broadcast in 1987 and it was titled *Everyone His /Her Own Problem*. Ola Rotimi also authored a book called *African Dramatic Literature: To be or to Become* and it was published in 1991. In all his works, he evolved a theoretical English enriched by African proverbs and idioms and this reflects his idiolect and unique style of writing. It is necessary to state that Ola Rotimi taught at Macalester College in St. Paul Minnesota in the US and returned to Ife in 2000 and died that same year.

### The Data

Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* is selected given the relevance of its theme, plot, and characterization to our discourse functional orientation. Indeed it is a comedy which portrays the root of the problems of poverty, war, and disease confronting Africa, all emanating from poor leadership and management of resources. However, we are more interested in what the characters do with language and how this helps in projecting their individual message as well as the writer's overall theme. From the perspective of the Speech Act theory, we identified classes of acts and their sub-categorizations in the data.

The directives that featured are classified under five categories or sub-acts according to the functions they perform. They are asking, requesting, advising, admonishing, begging, instructing, urging and warning. The representatives are also used to perform the following functions: contending, informing, narrating, suggesting, disputing, responding. The expressive have specific acts, namely: begging, rejecting, apologizing and praying. The commissives only featured in terms of threat.

**The Directives:** These are sub-divided into questions, requirements, advisories and permissive.

**Questions:** Going through the analysis of the selected passages of Ola Rotimi's *our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, it is observed that he employs the question to develop his plot and to relay messages to the reader. Examples of questions can be seen in

**Data4 P.24** of the text.

**Liza:** What did you say?

**Sikira :** who is ahousemaid

Ola Rotimi, through his theatrical wit, uses these questions to bring out the theme of domestic violence in Major Lajoka Brown's home. The quarrel between Liza, the sophisticated wife and Sikira, the village woman was revealed by the use of directives.

**Asking:** The writer employs some directives in terms of asking.

Okonkwo: And what would one extra woman do to win you those votes?

Major Lejoka Brown's friend Okonkwo ask this from his friend of what benefit is Sikira marriage to the issue of winning election and Lekoja- Brown explained in the succeeding utterances.

**Advisories:** Some directives are used to giveadvise by the characters. An example of such utterance is found in DATA 4 p 24 where Mama Rashida advised Sikira to listen to Liza.

**Mama Rashida:** AH right, that enough listens to what she has to say, now.

**The Representatives:** The representatives are categorized into eight-six

They are contending, descriptives, conclusive and surprise.

**Contending:** The writer uses a lot of contending statement to reveal the theme of conflict that ensued in Lajoka-Brown's house, most especially, the emergence of Liza and the reaction of Sikira to the 'imported wife' generated a lot of arguments and contentions on who is the senior wife. An example can be found in data 5 pg 25

**Mama Rashida:** Sikira!

**Sikira:** More what?

**Sikira:** More night; therefore, by native law and custom, I hold a senior place in this house.

**Mama Sikira:** Enough! Come now! (shavesSkikira roughly out of the living to your room)

**Liza:** (blankly) Native law and what!

**Disputative:** Certain utterances were made to express dispute among the characters. An example can be found mainly on DATA 4 p24 of text.

**Sikira:** - Let's go, Mama Rashida! that fool wants her proud feathers plucked!

**Liza:** [rising] Now wait a minute!

**Mama Rashida:** I'd rather die than let that cockroach kick me around!

**Sikira:** I'd rather die than let that cockroach kick me around!

**Liza:** Who is a cockroach?

**Sikira:** Who is a housemaid?.

Ola Rotimi used this abusive word to also reveal the dispute in Lejoka- Brown family. Sikira refers here to Liza as fowl and cockroach. This brings about the negative effect of polygamous life in an African setting; a life that is full of quarreling, fighting and disputes as a result of shared love and petty jealousy among the people involved. Polygamy to Liza, a Kenyan girl brought up in the western world is totally a betrayal of trust.

**Informative:** Examples of informative can be seen on page 10 DATA 2 of our analysis.

**Lejoka-Brown:** She is the daughter of the president of the Nigerian Union of Market Women **Okonkwo:** - Oooh

**Lejoka-Brown:** I married that problem only four months ago.

In the exchange above, Lekoja-Brown was informing his friend, Okonkwo of who Sikira is and how she has been a problem to him rather than a blessing. He married Sikira for political purpose. Lejoka-Brown's intention was to win the election by using Madam Ajanaku, Sikira's mother as a strategy in reaching out to the market women for more votes in the coming election. The theme of selfishness rather than patriotism is reflected here.

**Suggestive:** Some representatives are made in the form of suggestions. Examples can be found on p II DATA 3 of our analysis.

**Okonkwo:** Send the two women away for the time being.

**Okonkwo:** Major, after all, it was a suggestion. J-e-ee-sus wept!

**Okonkwo:** was suggesting here how Lejoka-Brown will hide the other wives from Liza on her arrival to cover the unfaithfulness and lies.

**Narrating:** The playwright employed some narratives in the play. An example can be found on page 9 where Lejoka-Brown was narrating how he got married to Liza to Okonkwo.

**Lejoka-brown:** [irritably]... she took very good care of me at the hospital. Two months after, we went to the marriage registry and... fixed things up.

**Responsive:** In the text, we have some instances of responses that are sudden and rather quite sharp to show a lack of interest and disgust. An example is that of Liza and Sikira

**Liza:** [Impatiently] sure, sure, now that that's established, let's turn to the next point... Mr. Lejoka-Brown and I got married.

**Sikira:** - [a grunt] Halleluyah!

**The Expressives:** - The expressive that featured are in form thanking, rejecting, apologizing and praying.

**Thanking:** The only instance of thanking in our analysis is expressed by Lejoka-Brown in pg 10, DATA 2 of our analysis. Actually, the thanking is not a sincere one but to keep Sikira out of what does not concern her about the cablegram that the major (i.e. Lekoja-Brown) received from Liza.

**Sikira:** Polycarp said you got a cablegram. I hope it is nothing bad.

**Lejoka-Brown:** Thank for your concern!

**Apologizing:** Some of the expressive are made in the form of apology. An example is found on pg 10 when Sikira apologized to Lekoja-Brown for her intrusion.

**Sikira:** Sorry, Sir.

**Rejecting:** Examples of rejecting can be found on pg. DATA 1 where Lejoka-Brown rejects the food offer from Mama Rashida.

**Mama Rashida:** What will my Lord eat this evening?

**Lejoka-Brown:** - Nothing, Nothing!

**The Commisive(S):** The only instance of the commissive comes in form of threats.

**Threatening:** - We have some instances of threats from the analysis of the selected items in p 57 of *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*.

**Lejoka-Brown:** - For the last time, sister, let youngfeet take you into your room before thunder rumbles down your threat.

The above utterance was made to threaten Sikira who was ironically preparing for her election victory by wearing a half-naked dress that does not suit the African environment and Islamic religion which they claim they are practicing. The emergence of Sikira towards the end of the play is a pointer to the growing emergence of women in the political terrain of Africa. And this we believe is sources of resolutions to the unpatriotic and unstrategized political ambition of Major Teslim-Lejoka-Brown and the class of African politicians he represents.

The table below represents the distribution of the speech acts and function in the text.

**Table 1: Speech Functions in OLA Rotimi's *Our Husband Hasgone Mad Again***

Data	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
FUNCTIONS AND SUB-ACTS									
REPRESENTATIVES									
Informatives	1	5	1	2	2		1	1	-
Narratives	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Suggestives	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Disputatives	1	-	-	3	1	1	1	1	1
Responsives	-	-	1	-	2	-	1	1	1
Contending	-	1	-	4	6	-	1	-	.
EXPRESSIVES									
Begging	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Thanking	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Rejecting	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Apology	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Prayer	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
COMMISSIVES									
Threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Promises	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Offers	-	-	-	.	-	-	-	-	-
Directives									
Commands	-	1	1	1	-	-	4	-	2
Questions	2	4	5	5	3	2	5	3	4
Asking	-	1	3	-	-	1	1	-	1
Advisories	1	1	3	-	-	1	1	-	1
Permissive	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Table 2: Summary of Speech Functions in OLA Rotimii's *Our Husbandhas Gone Mad Again***

Functions	Data									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Functions										
Representatives	6	7	3	10	11	1	4	3	1	46
Expressives	1	2	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	6
Directives	3	7	12	6	3	4	11	3	8	57
Commissives	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Total	10	16	15	18	15	5	17	6	9	111

### Summary of Findings

From the functional analysis on the selected passages of the play, it was discovered that the directives are preponderantly used and this is followed by the representatives. The expressive and the commissives are sparsely used.

The commissives are at the lowest degree of occurrence. Talking about the message of the play, the projection of such pertain to domestic conflict within the African polygamous family, lack of patriotism among the political class, clash of culture, selfishness and lack of political strategies, among others which are projected mainly by the directive and the representative acts. The directives predominates the other functions. The expressive and commissives that featured sparsely are not without expectation because of the interactive nature of the text. We do not expect a monotonous speech function. The only function that did not feature is declarative.



## CONCLUSIONS

This study has been able to reveal the speech functions in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. It has also been able to find out the specific functions that are associated with the messages of the play. The study shows that the directive functions are associated with Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. It is seen from the study that the analysis of functions in the text will enhance a proper understanding of the message development and interpretation of the text to the readers.

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